

SHOW TIME: 260m 25*****

Deon Van Zyl and I did the usual by carefully racking up house points and as gently as possible slinked out of our respective beds at 04h30 in the morning some day early in 2010. Margaret, my gorgeous, delicious and very sexy wife, and I sleep curled up far closer than any sardines in a can and there is no sunflower oil to decrease any friction between us. So, to disengage from this embrace takes some very cunning maneuvers in the dark without collateral damage. But it seems that for once I succeeded.

I did not set off the security alarm managing to bypass all the appropriate beams correctly and the dogs did not bark. I escaped with minimal disruption to the household. The only problem is that I could not find the coffee drip filter holder so I had to do a McGuiver trick by placing a filter bag in a plastic bag with a hole in it. Of course, Margaret also did not find it and smugly told me later she used the fancy coffee machine we have. The device makes a noise like a high speed train trying to brake with a rusty braking system just before it is about to crash into a car at a level crossing. Indeed, if I had used the coffee machine or even ground the coffee which I had the fore-sight to do the night before, I would have been banished from the marital suite and had a restless night trying to do the sardine thing with one of my kids who would have nothing of it. Thus, the first and hardest crux of going trad climbing at Yellowwood was done. Solid grade 27 – my limit.

My good mate Deon Van Zyl who had been very grumpy just 13 days previously, and who had lied to his friends and to himself that he would never set foot on Yellowwood again was probably facing similar challenges but he also managed to escape relatively unscathed from the clutches of his loving and caring partner.

We met at 05h00 at the N1 city MacDonalds. (He got there first and under these circumstances you never can be late for your rendezvous or you won't find climbing partners again). And next stop was the base of Yellowwood amphitheatre. It was forecast to be cooler than the day before which got to 39 degrees C in Cape Town, about the warmest it ever gets here. 30% thundershowers were in the offing. We carried lots of water and drinks, around 9 litres between us, and the walk as always seemed longer and harder and definitely hotter than the previous time. I know this because I dripped sweat onto my specs before the first pylon and this usually only happens much higher up.

We drank and stashed some of the water about a 1/3 of the way up and ended up with spitting rain at the base. Tea, rack up, ropes flaked and Deon led off up the ramp pitches on a fairly obvious line I had spotted starting a few metres left of **Newborn** going diagonally left to join the crack system climbed by the Spanish dudes in December. It started raining properly and I had brought a Gortex rain jacket. Deon whimpered a little but managed to belay under an overhang which kept him sort of dry.

I followed the pitch and then it was my turn. It started raining again in earnest and easy grade 18 climbing became run out, scary and desperate. I hung around and fiddled waiting for the rain to stop and it did. Phew. I got to the next stance which was also an overhang and the rain abated for the rest of the day.

The next pitch moved left to a grotty looking crack with an undercut start and no pro. I shimmied myself across and after thrutching around found a runner placement and headed up. The climbing was technical because of the vegetation and dirt but not unpleasant and Deon was instructed to clean off all the muck which he duly did. He then gleefully informed me that all my difficulties were in vain as the crack yielded good pro and holds after the cleansing. Oh well.

The next pitch was very steep and overhanging and again the cracks were filled with dirt and grass which I could not clean without aiding. This led to easier climbing to a nice stance below a very overhanging scary pitch with a terrifying flake about 5 metres up.

Deon followed practicing aiding and then something memorable happened. Because of the hot weather we had decided to haul a bag with lots of water and kit with a separate rope that was tied to a gear loop on Deon's harness. Despite the rope being carefully flaked it decided to roll off the ledge as he was climbing and yanked off the haul bag that then took a fall factor 2 for 40m or so. The gear loop held, things broke up in the haul bag but not our water or the cokes!

I tried climbing the pitch and but could not even place the first decent piece of gear before being dragged down by gravity. It was very hot by now and no breeze. I abandoned the rack, selected some pieces and managed to place a dodgy RP 3 and an alien in a flared crack. I retrieved the rack and gingerly aided up to a good placement and then tested the scary flake which in fact seemed well keyed in. I was psyched out by now and aided up to easier ground and then did some wild moves through an overhang to gain a stance.

Deon had honed his aiding skills on the previous pitch and joined me in good time.

We abandoned our line and headed for the crack system on the left – the Spanish route. I got myself into trouble by rushing into a mega run out and with very poor gear did a very tricky move. I continued to an overhanging chimney and headed back to where our line was. This passed under a roof and I found chalk marks on the way. The climbing was not very challenging and my head was in the shade which was a great relief. Halfway along the rail I placed a good cam and lo and behold there was an 8mm bolt and hanger. It was so incongruous. WTF.

I clipped it anyway so Deon would notice it and continued up a grotty crack where a dodgy peg was to be found. I avoided the upper half of the crack and climbed clean rock by traversing left and then to the stance on the half way ledge.

We had had enough. We rapped **Down Time** and did the tea thing and walked down.

Mandatory beers were quaffed at Du Kloof Lodge and then on home to our very forgiving families. On the way down or perhaps on the route Deon gave me one of the most inspirational and motivating compliments ever. He said that he did not realize how good I was at fashioning new routes and especially at Yellowwood. This is from a guy who had hated being on Yellowwood just a few days before, had lost his cool on more than one occasion on that trip and of course I had lost my cool with him.

This time he carried up and down more than I did. He had kept his cool in much worse conditions despite his shoes killing his feet and no doubt will be back sooner rather than later. Despite the complimentary words he used, what I am sure he meant is that he was also inspired and motivated and this has proven true over the last 4 years since that effort. He has since on-sighted the rail pitch on Roulette which I still consider a serious 'head' route

Unfortunately, Deon was not available for my next attempt at completing the route, but Willem Le Roux came along and we managed to complete the route with some falls and dogging. Willem led the 1st pitch and the



Willem Le Roux at the second crux of pitch 2 (22) Show Time Photo: C Edelstein February 2012

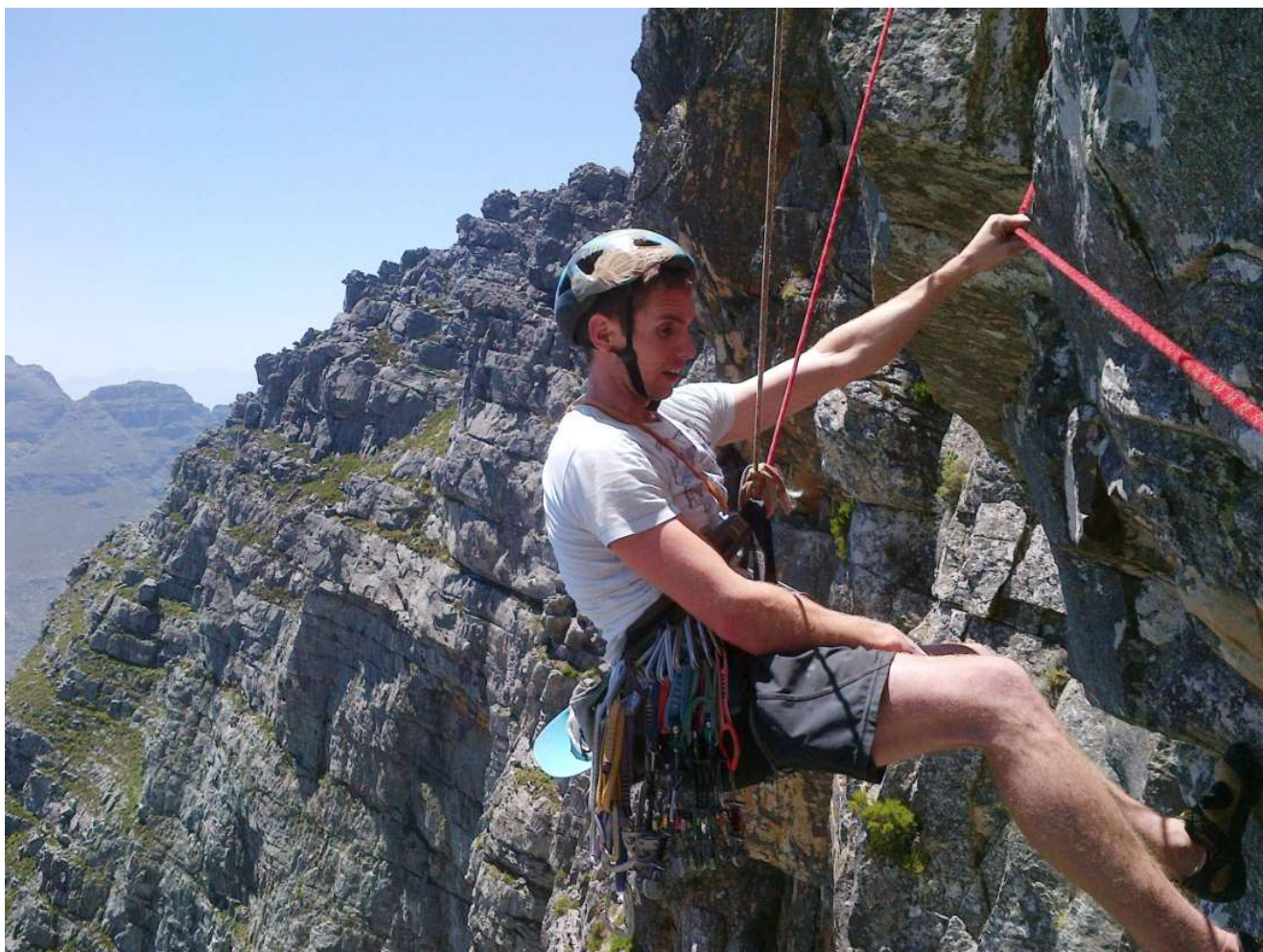
Pitch 4 is really complex and hard to read and Willem took a fall but did work it out. I managed to follow it free but only just.



Willem Le Roux at the crux pitch 4 (24) Show Time. Photo: C Edelstein Feb 2012

Pitch 5 stumped us but we left it for another time to sort out.

We returned again in 2012 and Willem failed again on pitch 5 and I struggled on everything!. This time we did not top out as we saw no point in continuing.



Willem facing disappointment yet again on his nemesis pitch 5 (24) off the half-way ledge of Show Time: Photo: C Edelstein 2012

In 2013 we brought a secret weapon. The inimitable Douw Steyn.

We all failed dismally. I failed on pitch 2, Douw failed on the crux of pitch 4 and Willem got spat of again on pitch 5.

The saga continued:

Then in 2014 Willem and I had another go and again, pitch 5 chunked Willem off although we managed the earlier pitches. I knew though, that the route was in the bag – I had managed to free all the hard pitches on top-rope!

We again did not top out.

On Saturday 28 March 2015 I slunk out of the house at 05h00 and raced to Willem's House by 05h30. Walk, tea, rack, ropes.

It was ***Show Time!***

Willem led the 1st pitch. I followed. All good.

I led my nemesis pitch 2 and styled through it.

Willem hiked the boulder problem start on pitch 3 and made it to the hanging belay with aplomb.

It was hot! I was nervous.

Pitch 4 starts with a corner to a roof. Then there is an obvious foot hold on the arête far right that is very difficult to get to if you are short. 3,4,5 tries and then a desperate balance move got me round.

Up to the overlap I crimped.

Gear placed from the knee bar including the shallow green camelot!

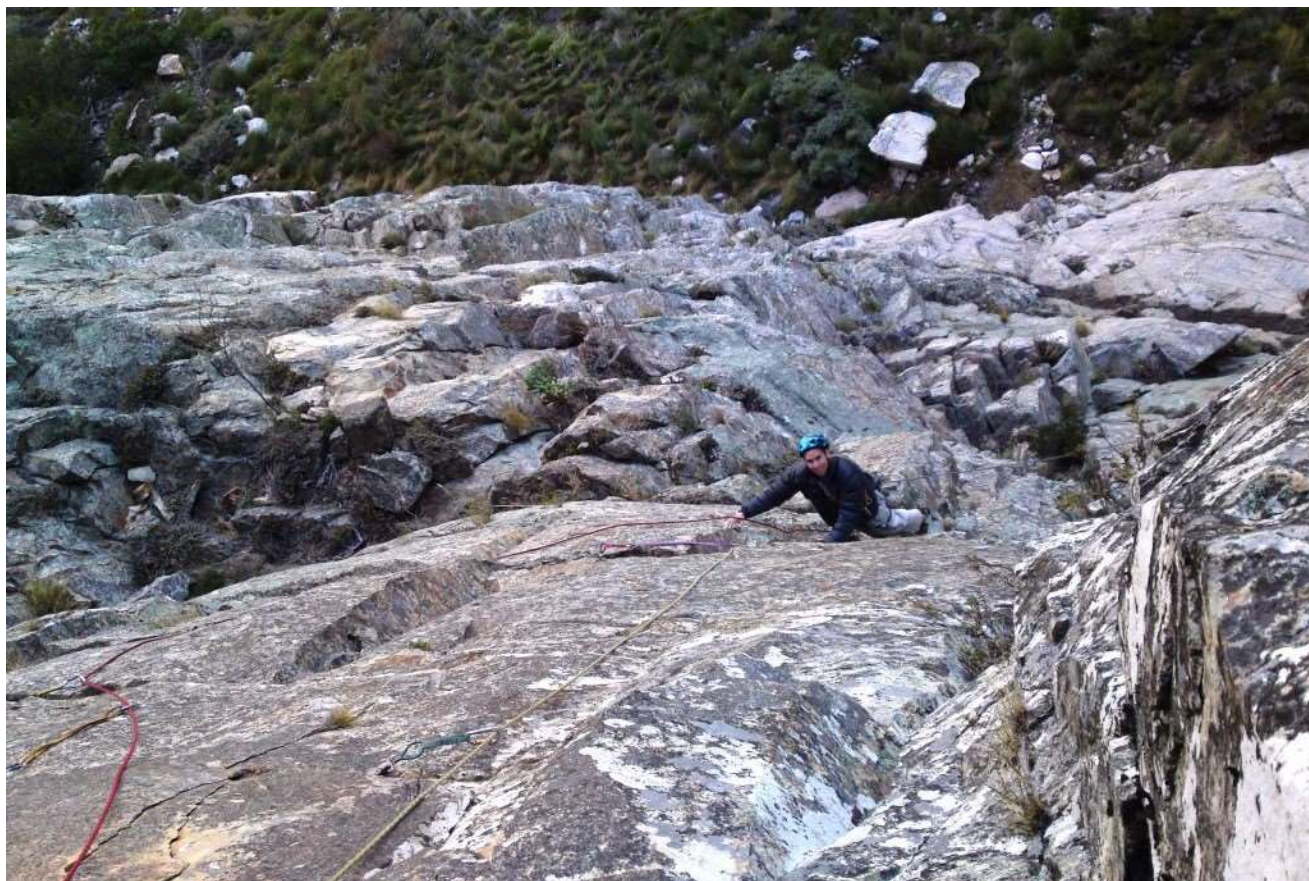
Then the real crux followed that entails a desperate lunge for a polished sloper high on the left. "Stick it" I tell myself besides the fact that there are no real foot holds. There is no friction other than a smearing with my right knee. Another lunge with the right hand to something.

And through!

Willem started pitch 5 as the sun got to us and it was very hot. He climbed the awkward recess to the crux carefully and slowly milking every rest on every hold. He had failed on this pitch no less than 5 times! Rail left, blue alien, clip tat, lay back and up he went smoothly, easily and with no fuss.

I followed finding it surprisingly easy.

He then led the 16 as I had done it before.



Willem Le Roux on pitch 6 (16) of Show Time April 2010. Photo C Edelstein

Then I led the the long superb 21 pitch which had spanked me the first time. Same process: Deliberate, slow, methodical, inching up, milking every rest on every hold.

Done.

And then the final pitch which Willem straightened with a fine harder finish.

Time to brag and boast and gloat.

We did it. We finally completed the First Free Ascent of **Show Time**.



Approach: Show Time starts left of centre of the main Yellowwood Amphitheatre about 7 metres left of the start of Newborn. The first few bolts of Newborn are visible from the base of the wall and the start of **Show Time** is marked by a small cairn of stones adjacent to a small flat clearing used as a bivvy spot.

Pitch 1: 50m 20 Climb easily up the grey slabs for about 30m just left of a vague recess and past an overhang. Head up right to the grey face and climb the shallow left facing corner and continue up to the overhang capping the red-orange rock. Move left to a ledge. (Find a good small cam placement in a pocket on the face above the ledge).

Pitch 2: 55m 22 S2 Move to left end of the ledge and step across the void to below a crack that can be vegetated. The crack does take good pro if cleaned. Continue up to and the past the large overhang on its left and climb the left facing dihedral to a large ledge on the right. Climb the overhanging strenuous gnarly looking crack for about 10m to a ledge system. Move left 2m and climb the left facing corner starting at a thin flake plastered against the wall on the left. Continue easily up the orange left facing corner to the grey overhang and pass it on the right. Semi-circle up and right to avoid the very steep crack in the white rock (climb it if you are bold and strong). Head easily up and left to a right facing corner system on yellow rock topped by a robust bush to a stance. With 50m ropes, stance 5m lower on a decent ledge, then scramble up the corner system to start of pitch 3.

Pitch 3: 20m 23 (Don't be tempted to combine pitch 3 with any part of pitch 4. It will be very tiring and you may run out of gear, communication and end up in a crappy hanging stance anyway!)

Strenuous climbing past an inverted 1" cam placement brings you to a juggy rest. Continue up to the overhang and the move right on the gnarly rock to pass the roof on the right. Continue up a few meters to a hanging stance under the overhang.

Pitch 4: 48m 24 If you are lucky and you manage to work out the best way to climb this pitch, then it is probably only grade 23. Climb the left facing corner to the overhang. Step right onto the arête and clip the fixed wire if you wish. Continue up past the small overhang to easier ground. Continue straight up for 4m or so and then move left about 3m. Do not climb the obvious white recesses but climb the grey rock bulge between them directly above the bomber rock 1 placement (only grade 19) to a large rail under the overhang. You can place a large cam on the right to protect your second but the rail generally is at least size 4.5 Camelot. Rail all the way left easily to the grotty corner and climb it. Or keep moving left on a clean rail to circumvent it. Climb up to the (halfway) ledge and clip a bolt left there by some Spanish climbers and stance right there so you can see your second. If you did not find pro in the large rail for your second then move all the way back right to stance above that point so your second is protected with a more vertical rope. (Sounds complicated but will be evident when you are there.)

Pitch 5: 24 35m. Lie back the grey flake on the left and continue up the brittle recess until the holds run out. (There is good pro but the holds seem very dodgy). Step out left on to the arête on good rock and continue to the small overhang. Compose yourself on good holds. Continue straight up if you are bold and strong or move left 3m and climb the crack into a shallow recess past a "nice-to-have" thread that is in situ. Continue up about 10m and rail right to a good ledge.

Pitch 6: 30m 17 It seems sensible to climb straight up but there is no pro and it is tricky indeed. So, move right 3m and climb the easy recess for about 5m. Then climb diagonally back left above the stance to the obvious rail capped by an overhang. Rail easily all the way left to a good ledge at the base of the right facing corner. Peter Robbins and Clinton Martinengo climbed through overhang to join **Blood is Sweeter than Honey** (2016).

Pitch 7: 35m 21 Climb the corner that is vegetated in places for 30m to where it steepens. Climb the steep overhanging crack till you can rail 3m right to a good ledge. (This pitch has really good climbing despite the chossy appearance.)

Pitch 8: 40m 19 Climb up to the overhang past the right side and then up easy blocky climbing to a rail system. Move right about 10m and avoid the first left facing yellow-orange recess. Continue to the next grey one and climb up it. Head easily diagonally up left to a grey overhanging crack and crank through this to top out.

Enjoy the view.

DESCENT:

Head east (towards Rawsonville) to the **Timerity Abseil** 10-15 minutes. Keep going downwards past the largest gully (**Yellowwood Crack**) and then head north-east for the furthest and lowest gully. You will eventually see cairns leading you to the gully.

GEAR:

50 or 60m ropes. 60m ropes are safer in case you have to bail using **Down Time**. But you can escape down **Newborn** with fifties.

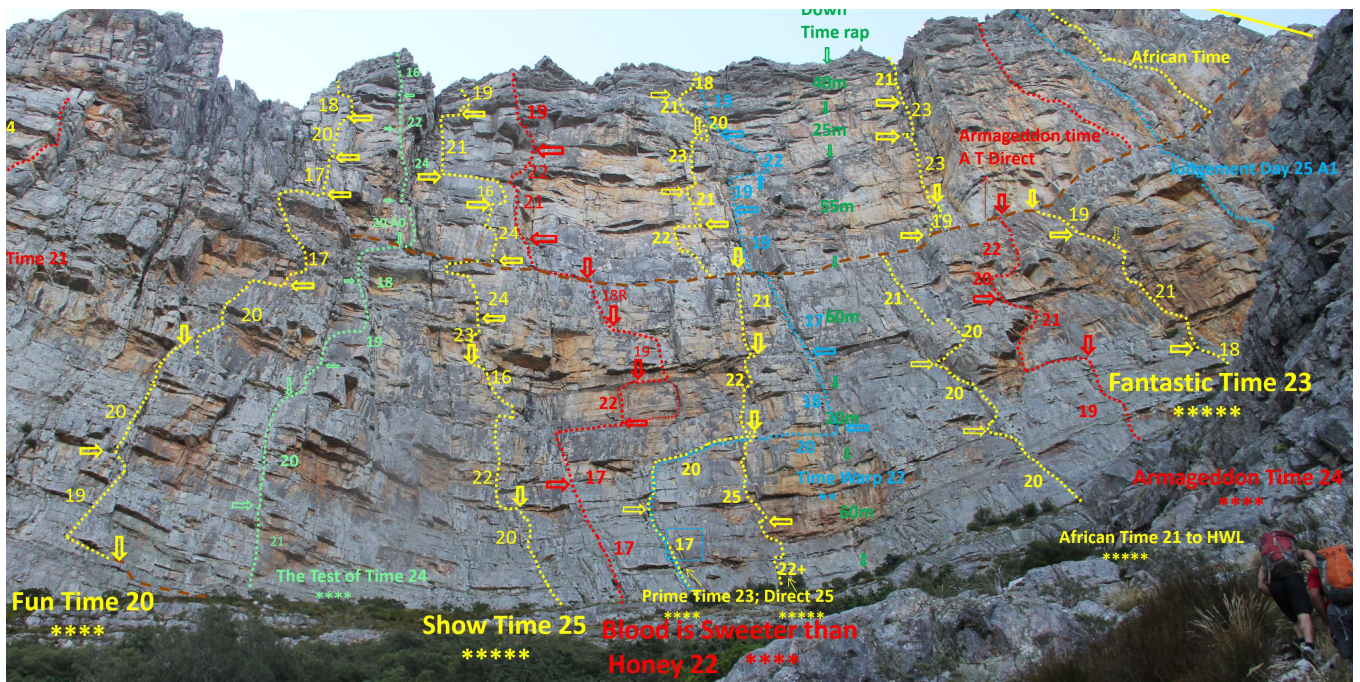
Doubles on cams to 1,5 inch is recommended. Single set nuts to size 10 or 12. . 4 QD's 10 Slings or 8 Slings and one very long sling is useful. No RP's required.

First attempt to halfway ledge: Charles Edelstein and Deon Van Zyl March 2011

First complete ascent: Charles Edelstein and Willem Le Roux April 2011

Further failed attempts by Charles Edelstein and Willem Le Roux in 2012, 2013 with Douw Steyn and 2014.

FFA: 28 March 2015 Charles Edelstein and Willem Le Roux



BLOOD IS SWEETER THAN HONEY 240m 22 ****

Blood is Sweeter than Honey is, in my view a superb route with excellent and consistent climbing on a good line up a fantastic face. Although the grade is generally moderate with only a few grade

20 or 21 moves here and there it is a potentially serious route and not for the faint hearted. I would give it a seriousness grade of at least S2. It requires competent trad climbing with lateral thinking here and there. The on-sight grade is considerably harder –perhaps even by two grades - than a repeat ascent and overall it warrants a grade of 22. I would rate it as a “must do” for any aspirant trad climber.

Tony Dick and Charles Edelstein, that’s me, climbed the route on Friday 26 October 2007. The route was first climbed on the Yellow Wood Amphitheatre in 1987 by Paul Schlotfeld and company. The description can be found in the 1988 MCSA journal. It is a serious route for it’s grade and requires competent and careful trad climbing on all the pitches. The least serious pitch and the best protected is actually the 8th pitch that is graded 22. In fact, I found this particular pitch to be only grade 20 or at most 21.

The first two pitches belie the grade of 17 and requires some lateral thinking to climb. Don’t bother combining them as the rope drag that ensues merely slows one down.

The third pitch is excellent and is grade 22 but the route description is a little confusing. It states: “climb up *past* the open book”. When it should merely state “climb the open book” that is directly above the right side of the belay ledge. The open book has a tricky start and found myself having to do a balancy step up with using a very reachy pinch grip with my right hand. The climbing then requires technical stemming moves but the pro is OK. It seems that an easier option may be to traverse far right to the left facing corner and climb that. However I have yet to do so.

Don’t combine this pitch with the 4th unless you are going well and you found the 3rd easy. The 4th 19 pitch is very serious if you diagonal up to the right from the shale rail. There is a long side-ways run-out with no worthwhile gear placements until you are virtually through the crux in the overhang. However, an easier option is to traverse low along the shale rail and climb up below and to the right of the overhang.

The 5th pitch is fairly straightforward and the 6th grade 18 pitch is again run-out but experienced trad climbers will find it superb and positive. Avoid climbing this route after rain. It is then run-out and wet.

The 8th grade 20 pitch is a little sketchy with regard to the protection and the rock and the moves seem to force you into a strenuous layback at the crux. But the way to do it is to do a stemming move.

The 9th 22 pitch is well protected and is only about grade 20 or, at most 21 if you continue to the top of the recess before moving out right.

The 5th pitch is fairly straightforward and the 6th is again run-out but experienced trad climbers will find it superb and positive.

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The 10th and 11th pitches are spectacular, first by exiting out left under the massive overhangs and then up the final airy arete.

Descent: Walk down east to the *Timerity Abseil*.



Willem Le Roux on the spectacular airy final arete on Blood is Sweeter than Honey: Photo: C Edelstein 20 August 2015

Blood Is Sweeter Than Honey '22' (G3)

Start in the middle of the amphitheatre, just right of a prominent big block. The route follows the obvious break up to the first set of big roofs about 120 m up.

1. 45 m '17' (F3): Follow the obvious fracture system to a small roof, then keep going to a block belay.
2. 40 m '17' (F3): Step left and follow the break, occasionally moving out right to a belay ledge on the left.
3. 25 m '20' (G2): From the right of the ledge, climb up past an open book and traverse right to a hanging stance below the roof.
4. 25 m '19' (G1): Traverse right to a break in the roof, climb through the roof and up the wall to a small stance on the right.
5. 30 m '17' (F3): Climb to the small roof above the traverse left under the roof, keep going to a recessed corner with an arête on the left.
6. 40 m '18' (F3): Step up and out left onto the arête, climb to the big half-way ledge.
7. 25 m '10' (E2): Scramble up and left into the recess. Make a stance on a blocky ledge on the left side of the recess.
8. 40 m '20' (G2): Climb the face above, moving out slightly left onto the arête, keep going up to a small stance on the right below some roofs.
9. 40 m '22' (G3): Traverse left to a break in the roof, climb the break until forced to move right and up (crux: peg runner). Keep railing right to a break and move up to a small stance.
10. 35 m '19' (G1): Climb the open book above and then move left into the recess below a large roof. Move up and rail out left under the roof. Stance around the corner.
11. 40 m '16' (F2): Climb the recess above, to below a roof, move out left and up. Scramble to the top.

Opening party: Paul Schlotfeldt and Dave Shewell, January 1988.

PRIME TIME DIRECT 260m 25 *****

Tiny cams like black and blue aliens are essential. Unless you are very bold, this route eats small cams. So, take double to ¾ inch. Only need one each from 1, 1.5, 2, 2.5 and 3 inch.

Standard set of nuts to one inch.

Pitch 1. 22m 23. Start just left of the "camp" site off some blocks just right of a bushy area. It is clear to your right. About 40m above is a rectangular overhang. Climb easily for 10m to a left facing corner. Climb the corner to a loose ledge with Aloes. You will see a bolts on the wall to your left. Move right a few metres along the ledge and then climb to a loose red/orange traverse line and then up funky moves to a good stance. There is another bolt to your left.

Pitch 2: 30m 24/25. Move off right and climb up to a shale rail. Place one or two large cams here. Continue up into the right facing corner below the rectangular overhang and step out left to do a move up to very thin rail level with the overhang. Take care to place one or two micro cams. Climb the crux up to the base of the left facing corner.

Continue up the left facing yellow/red corner to the overhang. Rail right and to the arête. Climb the arête for 3m to a rail and rail right for 3m and then continue up the right sloping ramp to a stance on the left. (old peg).

Pitch 3: 30m 22 Climb directly up heading for the large left facing red corner. Place good gear where available as it becomes run out. Once in the corner go right on a gnarly grey rail. Move into the corner systems up to the right and climb up to a large ledge on the right.

Snort starting the 3rd (22) pitch of Prime Time with a full rack.

Photo Stewart Middlemiss 2010

Pitch 4: 21 55m. Step up off the left edge of the ledge and continue up the crack system for 55m to the halfway ledge.

Pitch 5: 16 15m. Walk left and climb up easy blocks to a ledge that is down and to the left of the obvious nose.

Pitch 5: 22 20m. Climb the steep crack up to the left for 2 or 3 metres and then step right onto the red/orange face. Continue up to the shallow right facing corner and then exit left of the overhang on dodgy rock to continue a few meters to a rail. Rail right to a good stance,

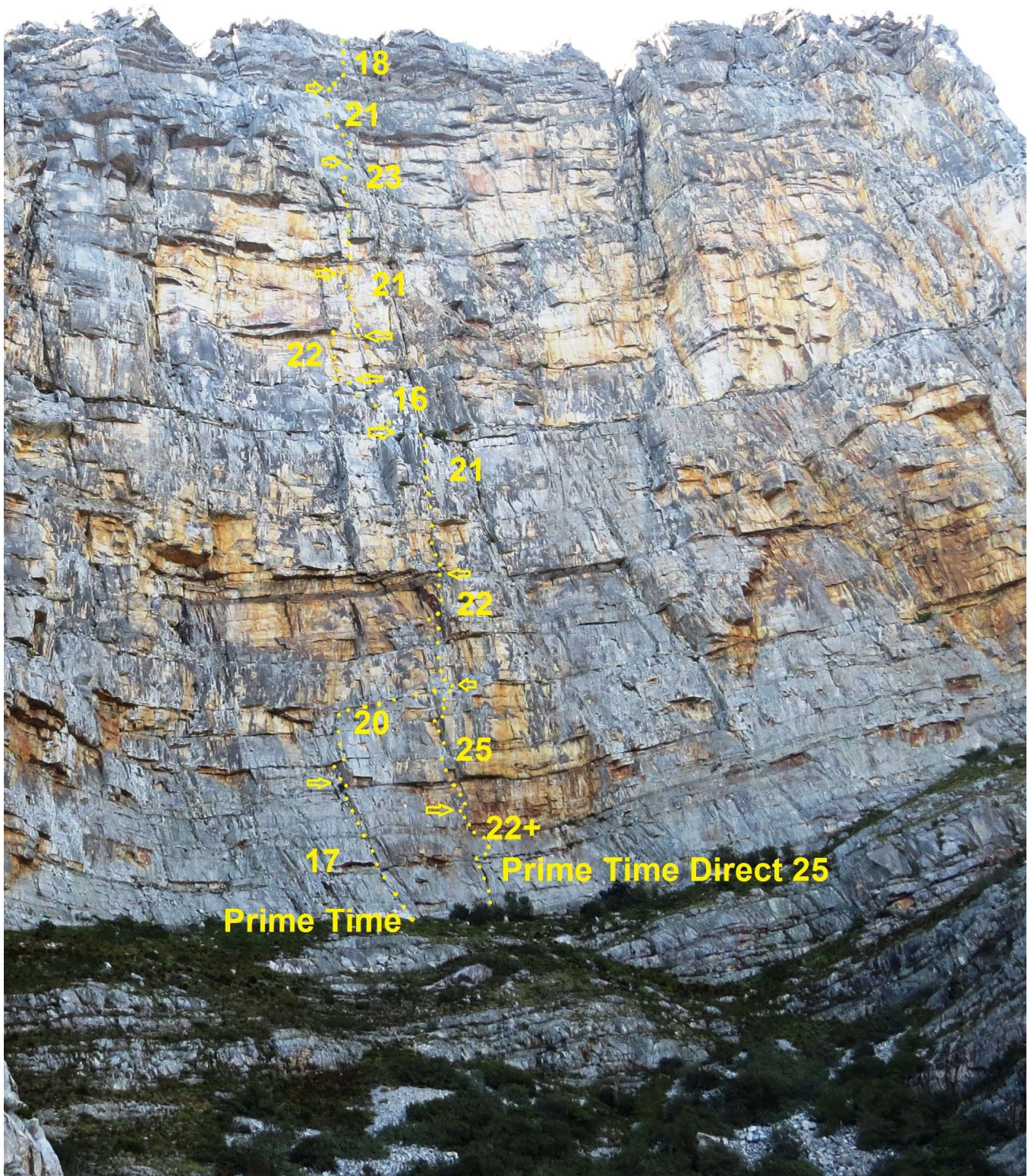


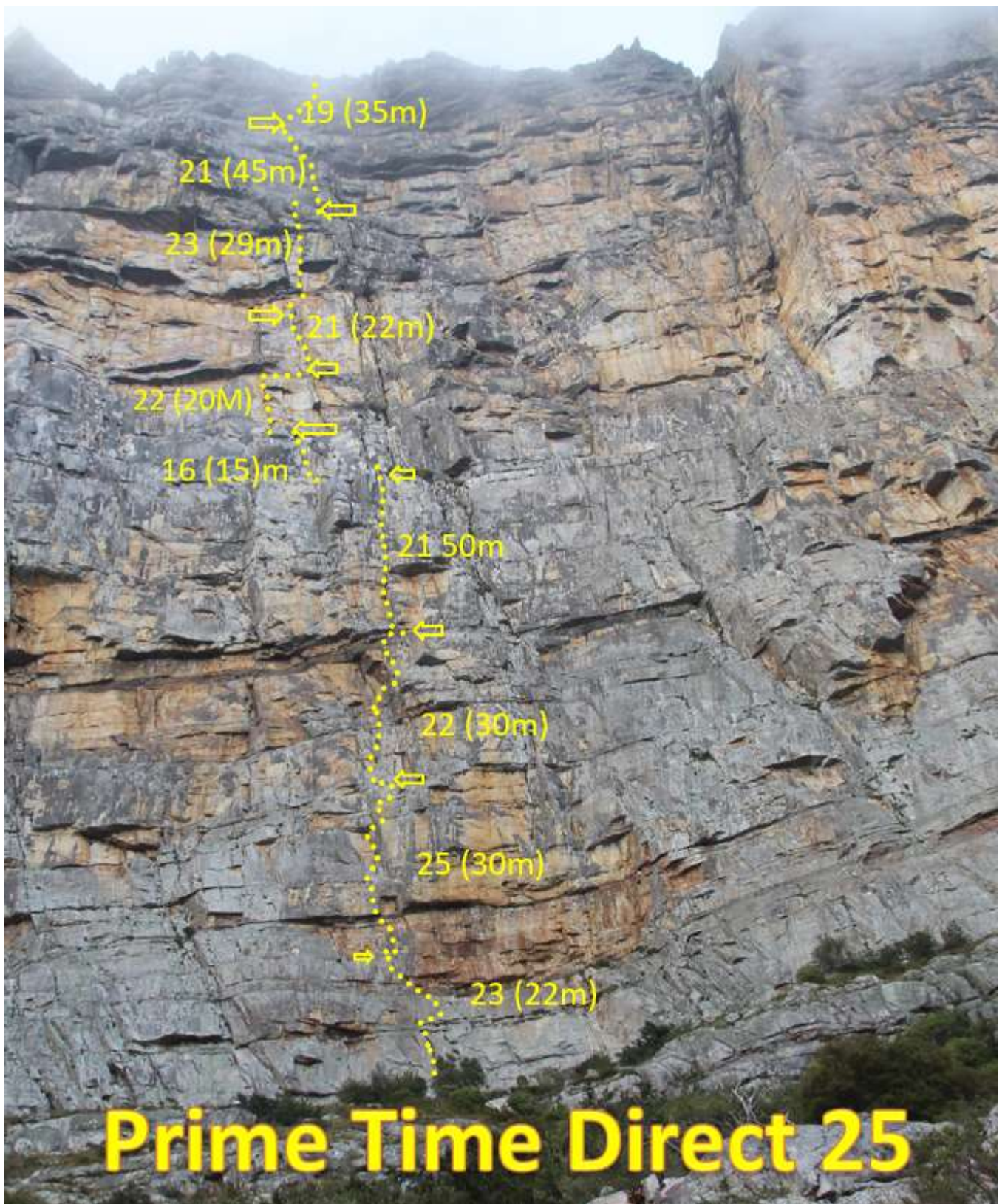
Pitch 6: 21 22m. Climb the crack system to a hanging stance about 22m higher just before the steep right dihedral. If there are 3 climbers, then one may as well stay at the stance at the beginning of the pitch while the other clears the gear which is needed for pitch 7.

Pitch 7: 23 30m. Climb up to the rail and move right (small cams). Then move back left and pull onto the huge scary flake. Climb up this to the overhang and then step out left. Climb the overhanging crack system to where it eases. Move up left onto a ramp but climb straight through higher up by under-clinging the overhang. Do not escape up and left up the ramp which looks easier. It is dirty and horrible. Move up diagonally right to a rail and stance on the right on a sitting ledge. If you are short of gear, there is a thread point after the crux.

Pitch 8: 21 45m. Step right across the gap and climb the classic crack for 10m or so. Then diagonal out left and up the face (run out) to a large ledge system.

Pitch 9: 18/19 35m. Find your way out up and right.







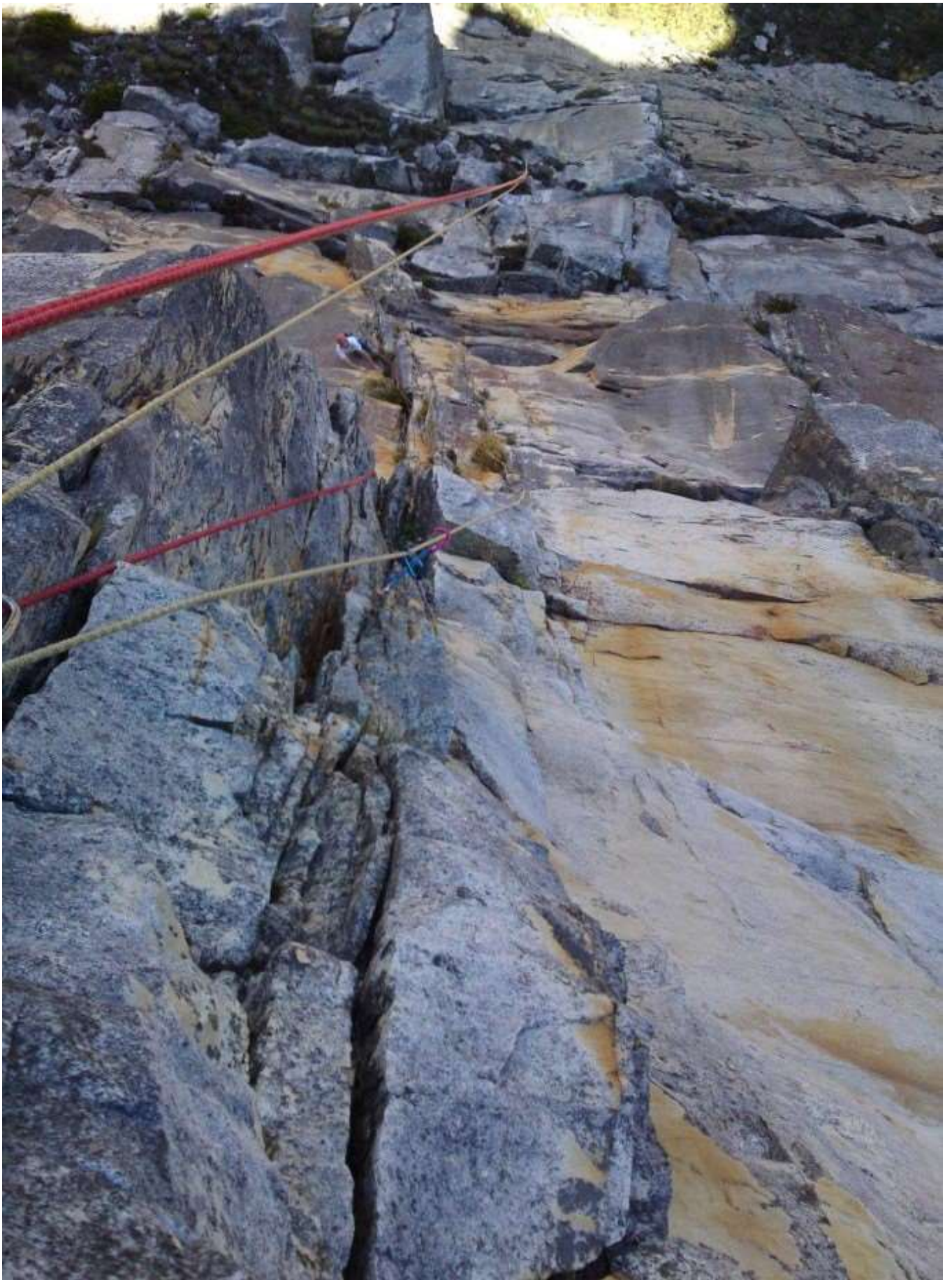
Anthony Hall on the third (22) pitch of Prime Time. Photo C Edelstein 2007



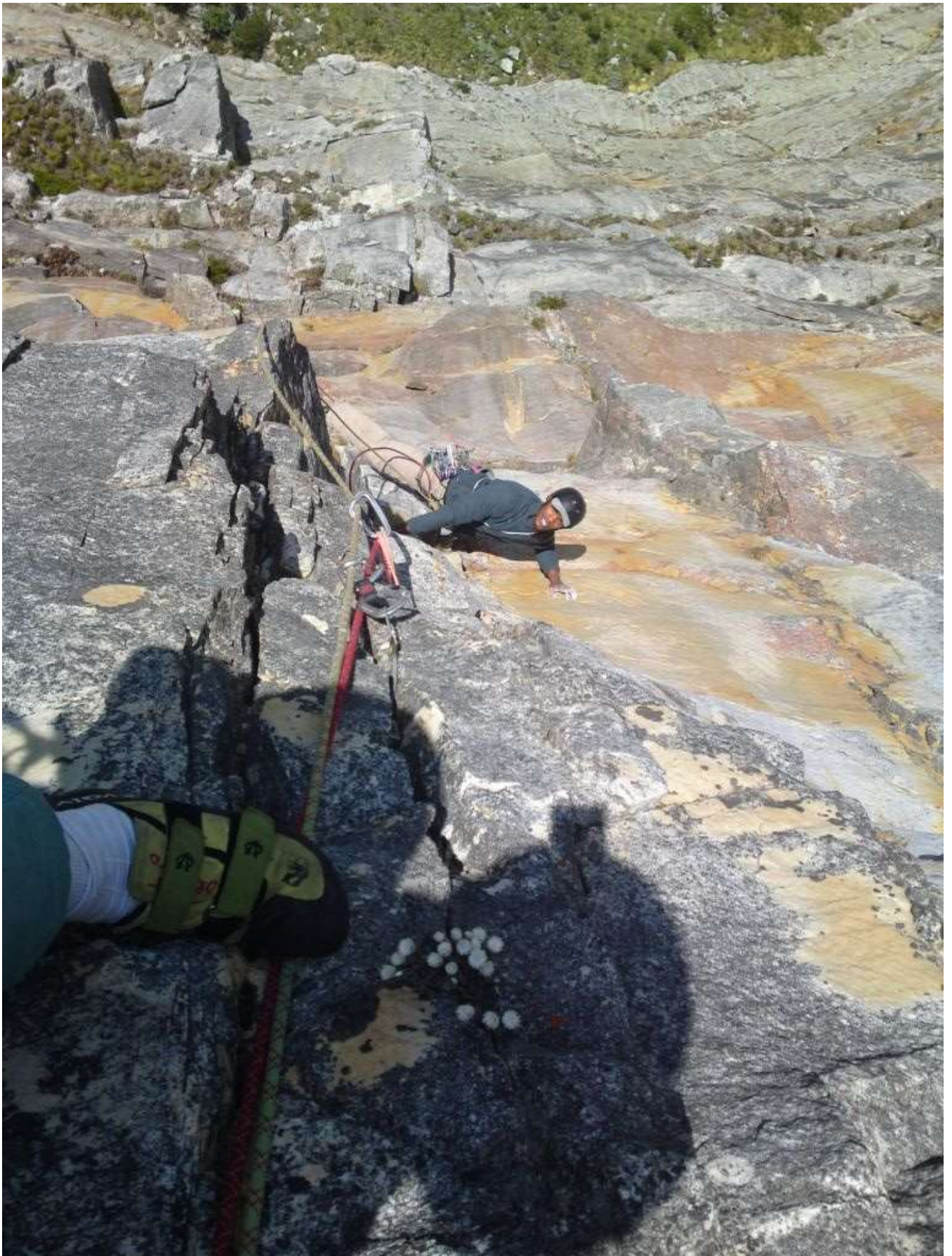
Anthony Hall on the 6th(22) pitch of Prime Time. The time stamp suggests we ain't gonna finish before dark Photo C Edelstein 2007



Snort starting the crux pitch of Prime Time. Photo Stewart Middlemiss 2010



Looking down the crux 23 pitch of Prime Time at Willem Le Roux. Photo C Edelstein



Looking down the crux 23 pitch of Prime Time at Farrel Davids. Photo C Edelstein Jan 2010

A Fine Time on Prime Time Direct E5 6a (25) by two not-so-tired and wanked out TATWOCians.

I was thrashing down the Yellowwood scree with Stewart Middlemiss yesterday in the gloom of descending night fall feeling exhilarated by doing a free ascent of Prime Time Direct. I was also wondering how come I had managed to do one of the hardest routes of my climbing career at age 51. Stewart reckons that it is because trad climbing takes so many years of experience to learn – something like 10,000 hours are needed to do an activity like trad well. He mentioned that the average age of the top amateur participants of a sport called ski-skating is around 40 to 50.

Well, I felt extremely gratified and privileged to be able to have such a feeling of empowerment and success given the way so many people my age are in deep trouble with their physical health. 99% of 50 year old people consulting with me with their sore hips, backs and knees are overweight, look 10 years or more older than me, are on cholesterol, diabetic or high blood pressure medication and are by and large un-healthy.

So, to force home the point, if you want to have a sense of physical well-being in later life, trad climbing is definitely right up there as a life style activity to keep you inspired, fit and healthy and your weight under control. As a doctor I feel two of my greatest medical successes are getting two mates trad climbing and it is worth mentioning their names. One is Mark Straughan, literally known as Jelly Belly by his kids. He, a year ago did his first trad route, Arrow Final and recently did his second trad route Slack Time on Yellowwood. He has lost 20kg in the last year! My friend Hugh Willis also needs a mention. Although he has always dabbling in trad climbing since University days, it is only since climbing Mt Kenya and doing routes like Milner Frontal in a day from Cape Town that he has lost the Michelin Tyre round his waist and now is a lean and keen athlete in anything that comes along.

But enough propaganda and to the day.

Stewart is one of the few South African climbers that has on-sighted ***Snapdragon, and Technicolor Darkness*** routes that I still have to lead clean. He has also climbed ***Automatic for the People*** and was on the finishing ascent of ***Dog of Thunder***. He has lived in Salt Lake City for the last decade where he regularly climbs grades in the high 20's. Like the rest of us his fitness has been hampered by age related injuries and ailments but he is always bok to do a big route with me when visiting here.

So, after a little training on ***Africa Edge*** – a route he grades 23 and he rates as being the best route he has done on TM – we did the 04h30 start to Du Toits. 90min walk up, tea and climb. We took 7 litres of fluid. It was going to be a hot day.

The first thing I noticed when I got there is that Stewart clearly has done his 10,000 hours in trad climbing because he was pro-active and efficient in flaking the ropes and getting ready to climb. From setting off from Cape Town and starting the climb, including having the mandatory cup of tea was just 3 hours!

Stewart led the 1st pitch of ***Prime Time Direct***. The first crux involves a very awkward and tenuous lay-back and stemming sequence up a left facing corner. At least the gear is bomber. He waxed it and then found the second awkward crux equally hard. I followed and for the second time found the first crux at my limit and very difficult to read. Although there is bomber gear for the leader I was happy to be on a top rope.



Stewart following pitch 3 (22) on Prime Time Direct Photo. C Edelstein

The second pitch is the monster pitch of the route. I find it as hard as any of the modern 25 pitches on TM that I have done. I set off up the first run out bit that Stewart also thought could do better with a bolt and then into the corner above with the no hands body tension rest. I placed the 2 RP's and then wobbled round left onto the face and up to the tiny hold that seemed to have

shrunk since my last sojourn there. I shook placing the shallow blue alien and then really struggled to get the tiny purple alien past my left hand that was in the way. I snatched a glance to see if the placements were OK and rocketed up to the next juglet. Again, time had eroded measurements. The RP 2 placement was much higher than I remembered and I was already beginning to wither. I fiddled it in and went for the move. My strength was draining fast and I cocked up the move by using the wrong left foot hold – same as the last time. I stretched out my left toe to the sloper and gingerly stemmed up with my right leg trembling and found the micro-edge. I could not move or bounce my hand up so instead, extremely tenuously, crossed over with my right hand and grabbed the crimp above.

The next section flowed well and I got to the stance unscathed. I felt the same as the previous time, that the route should end here. If these two pitches were on any crag anywhere in South Africa they would make for a great stand-alone route.

Stewart followed and impressed me by freeing the pitch. We agreed that the best way to grade the pitch would be E5 6a which translates to grade 25 even though the technical aspect of the crux was only 23 which is probably its grade if it were bolted.

I then raced up the 22 pitch and Stewart climbed the long 55m 21 pitch to the halfway ledge. The sun was beginning to peak out and Stewart did a fine ascent of the next 22 pitch which is only 22 if you have the beta to lay back up it. This is not obvious and I remember falling off it on my first attempt about 2 years ago.

I then led the next 21 pitch to the hanging stance. We had, as I always now do on Yellowwood, been hauling the pack with water, food, torches etc, with a separate rope. While Stewart was climbing and trailing the rope, the pack fell off the ledge and plummeted about 25m down to land on a lower ledge. Little did we know at the time but a small nuclear explosion took place in the pack involving an old apple, a can of coke and a large bag of Salt and Vinegar potato chips. Needless to say the bag was filled with a sticky mess that pervaded everything in it. Our water bottles were intact which was fortunate indeed because we needed all of the water and more.

I climbed the next crux pitch past the Damocles flake with relative ease and was surprised that I did not cramp or get pumped at all. I must be the fittest I have ever been for this type of climbing. Stewart followed but like so many of us before him, blew out at the crux and that was the end of his energy for the day. He was disappointed of course but as an old Prime Time vet I was not surprised at all and hence my challenge to anyone who does a beta-free on-sight of this route. The steepness of the route, the hot sun, the position of this crux high up on the route, the intimidation factor all make it one of the most difficult pitches on any route to on-sight at this grade. In its context it is undoubtedly also an E5 pitch but technically only 5b or 5c. He then led the next 20 pitch, but the sun, and sore feet were now becoming almost intolerable. I led the run-out grade 21 pitch with some temerity thinking my feet would slide off the little sloper holds in the hot sun but found it surprisingly easy and then combined the not-so-trivial top pitch to finish.

What a blast, what a place and how great to share it with one of my old mates.

We rapped down and almost got a rope stuck on the last point. And then down the hill to my van stumbling the last 20 minutes in the dark. I got Stewart to carry down some spare gear that I did not need up there as retribution for putting a rock in Tini's rucksack on a trip to Milner some 3 years ago. He did it with some misgivings but I whined about my neck saying I could not carry it. Fair is fair, I sort of convinced him, because he had the benefit of a full rack and ropes stashed at the base.

And of course, the day was consummated by the Windhoek lager stop at the Du Toit's kloof lodge.